AILA Research Network on Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy in today's developed and developing world

Symposium - AILA Congress, Tuesday 25 July 2017

Time	Session
10.15 - 10.35	**Welcoming and Opening Speech** Kerstin Dofs & Moira Hobbs (New Zealand) Abstract
10.35 - 10.55	**Plurilingualism and social class: Two aspects to take into account in autonomous language learning** Desirée Castillo, Victoria Madrid & Nora Pamplón (Mexico) Abstract
11.00 - 11.20	**Social autonomy and decision making in L2 group work** Diana Feick (Austria) Abstract
11.25- 11.45	**Phenomenologies of autonomy and agency in the South Caribbean: The case of Trinidad and Tobago** Diego Mideros (Trinidad and Tobago) Abstract
11.45 - 12.15	**Discussion**
12.15 - 13.55	**Lunch**
13.55 - 14.15	**Innovation and challenges in researching a pedagogy for learner autonomy in context** Christine O'Leary (United Kingdom) Abstract
14.20 - 14.40	**Understanding curriculum: An actor network theory approach to learner and teacher autonomy** Michael Carroll (Japan) Abstract
14.40 - 15.10	**Discussion**

15.10 - 15.30	**Developing English oral skills in virtually interconnected spaces** Vera Menezes & Ronaldo Gomes-Junior (Brazil) Abstract
15.35 - 15.55	**The development of foreign language oral production through peer collaboration, autonomy and the use of ICT** Rosinda de Castro Guerra Ramos & Terezinha Maria Sprenger (Brazil) Abstract
15.55 - 16.15	**Discussion**
16.15 - 17.00	**Book Announcement (Routledge)** **Space, Place and Autonomy in Learning and Teaching** Garold Murray (Japan) & Terry Lamb (United Kingdom) **AGM** **Bring your afternoon coffee or tea**
17.00 - 17.20	**The synergies between a pedagogy for autonomy and criticality development in EAP in HE in the UK** Ana Ines Salvi, (United Kingdom) Abstract
17.20 - 17.30	**Discussion**
17.30 - 17.50	**Closing Address** Moira Hobbs & Kerstin Dofs
17.50 - Late	**Celebration of Research Successes!** **Refreshments**

Learner autonomy in today's developed and developing world

Kerstin Irene Dofs (Ara Institute of Canterbury, New Zealand),
Moira Hobbs (Unitec Institute of technology, New Zealand)

With many educational institutions around the world continuing to be developed and re-shaped and in a continual state of flux, this symposium will give delegates to this congress in a South American country, the opportunity to explore and discuss learner autonomy in today's developed and developing global environment. In many different countries of the world, today's learning contexts are changing, particularly with the advent of digital technology and a seemingly world-wide increase in research and practice of online and blended learning to suit the changing living and studying styles, and differing time availability, of learners. Many institutions are gradually moving towards an 'anytime, anywhere, anything' philosophy of course delivery, to meet the needs of learning and retraining evident in our societies today. This means that learners need to be adept at managing their own time and have the ability to be responsible for their own learning, to enable them to study both efficiently and effectively, and to be successful. With a range of language learning centre experts and academic learning advisers from around the globe coming together for this research symposium, the papers and posters they are presenting will include a variety of sub themes. Broadly, these will cover: Delineations and meanings of space and place for autonomy; Assessing the presence, extent and benefits of autonomy; Exposition of innovative educational practices as they impact on autonomy; and South American autonomy aspects to research and practice. The presenters at this Research Network symposium are all very interested in Learner Autonomy and research into this field.

Plurilingualism and social class: two aspects to take into account in autonomous language learning

Desirée Castillo, **Victoria Madrid**, **Nora Pamplón**
University of Sonora, Mexico

Recent research in the Mexican setting (Castillo, 2011, 2014; Castillo & Pamplón, 2013) has revealed two important aspects not previously considered in literature related to Self-Access Centers (SACs) and autonomy: plurilingualism and social class. Currently, there is an increasing interest and need to learn English as well as other foreign languages, so it is not surprising to find more plurilingual learners in the classrooms and in the SACs. This bring us to think which services can be offered in a SAC in order to help learners to better manage this kind of learning. On the other hand, being Mexico, along with other countries in the World, and in Latin America in particular, with a high discrepancy in the different social classes, there is a need to include this social aspect in the reflection regarding SACs. In this paper we will talk about this relation between autonomous language learning, plurilingualism and social class.

Social autonomy and decision making in L2 group work

Diana Feick
University of Vienna, Austria

This paper presents an investigation into the socio-interactional nature of learner autonomy in language learning groups. It is situated in the context of a mobile phone video project with 13Mexican adult learners of German as a Foreign Language. The aim was to examine autonomy, heteronomy and participation in L2 classroom negotiations in a group work situation. These constructs have been shown to be highly influential to second language learning in an institutional context (Lave & Wenger 1991, Little 2000, O´Leary 2014, Schmenk 2008, Thornbury 2012). The analyzed corpus consists of 620minutes of audiovisual data on groups in the process of decision making which is triangulated with 720minutes of individual video-stimulated recall protocols. Decision making episodes of three project groups were analyzed from an interactional, participational and sequential point of view. This analysis offers both an etic and an emic perspective on L2-group negotiation processes and allows for the detailed reconstruction of collective and cooperative participation mechanisms. It unveils a strong link between individual interaction styles, different types of participation, group discourse patterns and the display of group autonomy and/or personal autonomy. Using video and transcript examples of the between-methods triangulation for illustration, the paper presents an empirically grounded, innovative theoretical model of social autonomy in the L2 classroom.

Phenomenologies of Autonomy and Agency in the South Caribbean: The case of Trinidad and Tobago

Diego Mideros
The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago

This study presents the emerging themes of a phenomenological (van Manen, 1984) exploration of autonomy and agency among undergraduate Spanish majors in Trinidad and Tobago, an English-speaking Caribbean country with close proximity to Spanish-speaking Venezuela. Students' lived experiences served as a vehicle to explore the opportunities students in the inquiry had to exercise their agency as L2 learners. From sociocultural (Lantolf, 2011) and identity (Norton, 2013) research perspectives, attention was given to the different kinds of mediation that students were afforded in their lived experiences as well as the access they had to practise the language. Equally important was the issue of how students' lived experiences shaped their approaches to studying (Entwistle, 2002) the language. This study argues that if both agency and autonomy are construed as enactment (Murray et al., 2014), they are very much a matter of approach to studying in L2 institutionalised learning.

Innovation and Challenges in researching a pedagogy for learner autonomy in context

Christine O'Leary
Sheffield Hallam University, UK

The multidimensional nature of current conceptualisations of learner autonomy combined with the need to access both individual and social constructions presents both ontological and epistemological challenges when researching a pedagogy for learner autonomy.

This paper will discuss the benefits and methodological challenges of exploring the development of learner autonomy and its implication for practice from a postmodernist and social constructivist perspective, based on a qualitative case study of the development of advanced specialist and non-specialist foreign language learners and their teacher as a learner practitioner-researcher, in a large Higher Education Institution in England. It will show, in particular, how such methodology facilitates a dynamic research design, providing an opportunity to adapt and use existing theories whilst maintaining a strong emphasis on the learner's 'voices', conclude with a set of recommendations together with the limitations of such an approach.

Understanding curriculum: an actor network theory approach to learner and teacher autonomy

Michael Carroll
Momoyama Gakuin University, Japan

This paper, attempts to use Actor Network Theory to describe a university curriculum as a process in which human 'actors' (teachers, learners, administrators and others) interact with each other and with aspects of their environment considered to have agentive roles similar to those of the human participants (books, computers, desks, classrooms, physical spaces, online spaces and so on), to form the networks which embody curricula and curriculum change. As teachers or learners taking part in any curriculum process, the knowledge we enact, the identities we take on, and the behaviours we engage in are all influenced by these networks. Put simply, this kind of approach is an attempt to understand why specific curriculum changes are successful or unsuccessful, and how we can go about initiating the process of change in rational and sensitive ways.

Developing English oral skills in virtually interconnected spaces

Vera Menezes, **Ronaldo Gomes-Junior**
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brazil

This presentation describes the results of an investigation on university students' autonomy in a network of virtual spaces for the development of basic oral skills in English. A 60-hour course hosted in a Moodle platform used digital tools such as voki, vocaroo, UTellStory, VoiceThread, padlet and YouTube, (1) offered opportunities for asynchronous speaking experiences; (2) provided opportunities for collaboration; (3) stimulated the use of different genres; and (4) created equal opportunities for everyone to use language, autonomously. The research methodology included interviews, questionnaires, learning journals and participant observation. The first manifestation of autonomy happens at the very moment of enrolment because it is the students' choice to include the course in their curriculum and also to drop out. They must also deal with the choices offered by the tasks and by time management.

The development of foreign language oral production through peer collaboration and the use of ICT

Terezinha Maria Sprenger, **Rosinda de Castro Guerra Ramos**
Universidade Federal de São Paulo, Brazil

The paper will focus on the development of foreign language oral production through peer collaboration and the use of ICT in a pre-service teacher education program aiming at fostering learner autonomy. Our groups of students are very heterogeneous concerning the command of the language, and those who have little familiarity with the language have difficulty to keep up with the classes, especially in the first terms of the course. In Brazil, we hardly use English outside the university, and most of the learners do not know what they can do to improve their skills beyond the classroom, specially oral production. On the other hand, some are already fluent when they enter the university, and since they want to become teachers, they need to get engaged in and to think critically about the teaching and learning process. This context is suitable to encourage collaboration. Besides that, we have a laboratory for teacher development equipped with information technology resources with no funds to pay for staff. Therefore, our aim is first to describe the course of action we have designed for this context based on the language learning autonomy literature and, more specifically, the experiences of Heigham (2011) and Allhouse (2015). Next, we discuss the development and partial results of the project.

Synergies between a pedagogy for autonomy and criticality development in EAP in HE

Ana Ines Salvi
University of Warwick, UK

As part of a doctoral study (2013-2017) I have explored what is meant by developing student criticality in the context of teaching academic English in Higher Education in the UK via practitioner research. In the span of two years in which I taught academic English to six groups of students my practice was informed by both a pedagogy for autonomy and exploratory practice. My belief was that by providing students with space to reflect on their learning, to make choices about tasks and materials, to work collaboratively and to share not only the results of the work done but also the insights gained in the process of developing knowledge, among others, students were developing their criticality.

Therefore, while developing my own theoretical understanding of criticality (via reading the literature on criticality in EAP, CEAP and generally in education and related disciplines), I collected data that consists of the student-teacher communication via email and mobile phone, students' written reflection about their learning, students' in progress and complete written work, and their reflections on learning via painting. This data has been analysed for emerging themes, which on a second analysis were juxtaposed with meanings of criticality within the literature. Existing meanings of criticality within the literature on EAP and CEAP are still not deep and comprehensive enough. The overall study will bring about more comprehensive insights into what is meant by criticality development in EAP practice as well as into the synergies between a pedagogy for autonomy and criticality development. This presentation will focus on the latter with examples from one group of students.